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President:	Mr. Churkin/Mr. Dolgov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Kenes
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Somdah
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Kassianides
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bayley
	United States of America	Ms. Phee
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I wish to remind all speakers that, as I indicated at the morning meeting and in accordance with the understanding reached among members of the Council, they should limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to expedite the Council's work. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Lebanon, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, for your wise stewardship of the Council during this month of March and to extend my deepest appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Panama for his skilful leadership of the Council during the previous month. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his important introductory remarks and Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his statement. Once again, it underscored the tremendous challenges that lie ahead.

At the Annapolis Conference, all parties committed themselves anew to the Road Map, with the goal of reaching an agreement on statehood for the Palestinian people before the end of the current year. And what does Phase 1 of the Road Map, which was endorsed by this Council, call for? All present here know that it calls upon Israel to "immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001" and "to freeze all settlement activity (including natural growth ...)".

But what has happened since Annapolis?

In December 2007, Israel disclosed a plan to build 307 houses in the occupied territories, in Abu Ghuneim Mountain, a vicinity of East Jerusalem which it calls Har Homa. That decision came only a few days after the resumption of peace talks with the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, at Annapolis. On 12 February 2008, Israel announced plans to build more than 1100 apartments in occupied East Jerusalem. On 17 March the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, left no room for doubt about his Government's intentions, stating that Israel would not stop building on occupied land in and around Jerusalem.

On this matter, we cannot but commend Mr. Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, who, in his briefing to this body on 26 February, reiterated the principle that continued settlement activity is illegal anywhere in the occupied territory and is an obstacle to peace. He underlined the fact that settlement activity is "among the biggest factors undermining confidence in the Annapolis process and prospects for a viable Palestinian State". (*S/PV.5846, p. 3)*

We do not intend to disregard the fact that the Road Map in its same Phase 1 calls upon the Palestinians "for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to end armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere". However, could anyone, in good faith, reasonably imagine that the Palestinians could fully conform to such expectations while Israel continues to subject Gaza to an immoral siege and its civilian population to a deliberate policy of collective punishment? This is not to mention the daily raids and incursions it carries out in both Gaza and the West Bank.

These realities, no matter how painful, should not allow despair to prevail. The process initiated by the United States at Annapolis must not be left to erode. Hence, we cannot but support the efforts to hold a second international meeting in Moscow to help achieve a comprehensive and just peace based on United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madri Peace Conference, the principle of land for peace and the provisions of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Turning to Lebanon, in particular to its south, it is essential to move from the precarious situation of the cessation of hostilities to that of a permanent ceasefire. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) recently observed the thirtieth anniversary of its presence in Lebanon, a presence initially caused by the massive Israeli invasion of 1978 and which has continued because of repeated Israeli aggressions that culminated in the summer 2006 war leading to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

While we express our deep gratitude to UNIFIL and praise its remarkable performance and close cooperation with the Lebanese armed forces, we reiterate on this occasion that Lebanon remains entirely committed to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and abides by its obligations under it.

Israel, however, has yet to abide by its own obligations under that resolution.

As a matter of fact, the Secretary-General in his latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), noted that

> "UNIFIL has observed and reported a significant number of Israeli air violations of Lebanese airspace by aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles on an almost daily basis. ... On 17 February ... UNIFIL recorded 36 air violations"

And he rightly concluded that "All Israeli overflights of Lebanon's territory constitute violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006)." (*S/2008/135, para. 17*)

As to cluster bombs — the deadly legacy of Israel in the south, which kill and maim children, civilians mine-clearance experts, in addition to contaminating agricultural fields — the situation regrettably remains unchanged in spite of repeated calls on behalf of the international community. Israel claims to have submitted information on strike data, but the Secretary-General in his report qualified them as being "of very limited value". (*Ibid., para. 74*)

Regarding the northern part of Ghajar, the Secretary-General considered that its continued occupation by Israel "constitutes a continuing violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, resolution 1701 (2006) and the Blue Line" (*ibid., para. 70*). We reiterate here our support of the proposal that UNIFIL take over, on an interim basis, the administrative and humanitarian responsibilities on the Lebanese side of Ghajar, once the Israeli army has fully withdrawn.

The continued Israeli occupation of the Shab'a Farms remains a major threat to the security and stability of south Lebanon and constitutes a violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). On this issue, we urge the Secretary-General to start a long-due diplomatic process, based on our suggestion in the seven-point plan, that this area be placed under provisional United Nations custodianship after the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces and until the border demarcation between Lebanon and Syria become possible.

On the question of Lebanese detainees in Israeli prisons, we reiterate that those detentions are a breach of the basic rules of international law and that the prisoners should be released immediately and unconditionally. As for the Israeli soldiers abducted on 12 July 2006, the Lebanese Government reiterates that it has no knowledge of their status or whereabouts and remains ready to cooperate with the Secretary-General.

We also reaffirm that the internationally recognized borders of Lebanon in the south are as referred to in the 1949 Armistice Agreement, and as reiterated in operative paragraph 5 of resolution 1701 (2006). We continue to welcome UNIFIL assistance in marking the Blue Line.

I would also like to inform the Council that Lebanese authorities are maintaining a high level of vigilance against illegal movements of arms and material. In this context, my Government reiterates that the control of Lebanon's northern and eastern borders remains a shared responsibility with Syria, as per resolution 1701 (2006).

As to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon regarding the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the terrorist acts related to it, we would like to express our appreciation for the sustained efforts of the Secretary-General for its establishment. We also acknowledge the generous contributions made by Member States towards its funding, and we reiterate our strong conviction that this Tribunal will be a key judicial instrument in putting an end to impunity.

Finally, today, 25 March, a new President for Lebanon should have been elected. While the presidential elections have once more been postponed, we cannot but stress the importance for the stability and security of my country of these elections being held as soon as possible in accordance with the terms of the Constitution and pursuant to the Arab Initiative.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate your friendly country for chairing the work of the Security Council this month. We also would like to express our deep gratitude for the efforts of the Permanent Representative of Panama and the members of his delegation last month. I also wish to express my deep pleasure at seeing the Secretary-General participating with us in the meeting this morning.

The United Nations can no longer deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question on a

business-as-usual basis. The Security Council's inability to carry out its obligations cannot be allowed to lead to catastrophic results for our region and its peoples. The United Nations must therefore ensure the implementation of the resolutions it has adopted since its inception, denouncing Israel's occupation of Arab territories, violations of human rights and inhumane practices in contravention of international humanitarian law and the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention.

No preventive diplomacy can succeed unless it addresses the core issues of our region — the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan and southern Lebanon — thereby allowing a just and comprehensive solution based on the resolutions of international legitimacy, specifically resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the Arab peace initiative to be reached. The direct or indirect support of some parties for the ongoing Israeli occupation of Arab territories contravenes the principles and foundations of international law at the expense of the interests of Arabs and Palestinians. It sends the wrong message to Israel that its tactics of occupation, aggression, provocative settlement activities and the forcible annexation of territories enjoy the backing of its supporters. Those parties would do better to urge Israel to fulfil the requirements of peace, which is in the interests of all parties, including those who offer blind support to Israel. The absence of stability in the Middle East and the ensuing continued aggression and escalation will inevitably harm the interests of those parties.

Israeli actions in the occupied Arab territories — including killing, oppression, arrests, deportation, the demolition of homes and the expropriation of territories — can only be described as war crimes, genocide and a holocaust against the Palestinian people. Israel continues to engage in targeted killings, collective punishment and daily massacres of the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip. The victims, including women and children, number in the thousands. Israel continues to close the border crossings and to make the Gaza Strip the world's largest prison. It continues to deprive the inhabitants of that territory of the basic necessities and to prevent humanitarian assistance, including United Nations aid, from reaching them. Indeed, Israel is exercising its right of self-defence against electricity, water, medicine and food.

All such practices constitute collective punishment and grave violations of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. They reaffirm once again the fact that Israel is an outlaw State that blatantly flouts international norms, seeks to make the situation explosive, and obstructs any fair, comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict.

The situation in the West Bank is no better than that in Gaza, as reaffirmed by many senior international observers, including Alvaro de Soto, Jean Ziegler, John Dugard and, most recently, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, during his briefing to the Council last month, in which he noted Israel's ongoing construction of the separation wall in the face of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and its continued expansion of settlements, arrests and other actions that are well known to all and have made the lives of Palestinians into a living hell and increased their suffering. The Security Council's inability in recent weeks to adopt a resolution calling for an end to those crimes and Israeli violations is destroying whatever remains of its credibility.

Despite the passage of 40 years since the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan began, Israel continues to refuse to return the occupied territory to its motherland, Syria, and to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially resolution 497 (1981). Israel's practices have violated all legal and moral norms in the occupied Syrian Golan, where it pursues a policy of terrorizing and oppressing Syrian citizens and sending them to prisons and detention centres, where some have remained for over 30 years under no legal basis and in potentially lethal circumstances as the occupying authorities continue to ignore their medical needs. In that regard we make specific note of our citizen Bishr al-Maqt. Our Government has pleaded with the Secretary-General and the International Committee of the Red Cross to save his life. In that context, we ask the United Nations and the Security Council to pressure Israel to release those prisoners, including the Syrian journalist Ata Farahat, who was arrested by Israel because of his nationalist journalistic work.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to prevent the residents of the Syrian Golan from visiting their families and relatives in Syria, their homeland. Israel's policies extend to the very livelihoods of our children

in the Golan, making life even more difficult for them. That is quite evident in its policy of uprooting fruit trees, including not least the uprooting of 370 trees of our citizen Majed Fadel-Allah Abou-Awad on 23 February 2008. We informed the members of the Security Council of the details of that most recent Israeli aggression in our letter of 6 March.

There is no doubt that Israel's escalation against the Palestinian people, its forthcoming manoeuvres in the occupied Syrian Golan, its troops massing along the Lebanese border, its intensified settlement activities in occupied Jerusalem, its ongoing construction of the separation wall and assassinations of Palestinians will make the situation in the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine priorities on the agenda of the Arab summit shortly to be held in Damascus. The Israeli escalation is intended to have negative repercussions for the summit and to poison the regional atmosphere. Instead of reaching out for the Arab hand extended in peace, Israel has already begun to provoke the capitals of the area, just as it did during the Beirut summit of 2002, when it carried out the Jenin massacre only a few hours after the adoption of the Arab peace initiative.

The upcoming summit meeting to be held in Damascus therefore takes on added significance. The meeting will be an opportunity for Arab leaders to discuss and coordinate their positions. It will be a summit meeting of Arab solidarity to unify Arab perspectives and positions in the face of those Israeli challenges. It will therefore be an especially responsible summit meeting.

Syria has made a strategic choice for a just and comprehensive peace based on the well-known terms of reference for peace and decisions of international legitimacy. That means the return of all occupied Arab territories, including occupied Syrian Golan, to the 4 June 1967 lines, as well as the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. The ongoing occupation is a contradiction of peace, which by definition requires mobilizing all the necessary means to end the occupation. The question still before us is this: if the Arab hand that has been extended in peace is not met with a hand extended in peace from the other side, what reason can there be for continuing to extend that Arab hand?

Documenting the terrorism carried out by Israel would require an archive and an entire museum specializing in shedding light on Israel's war crimes and acts of annihilation and ethnic cleansing during its bloody history against Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians, Jordanians and others. It is astonishing that those who talk about their suffering in the Nazi Holocaust also publicly state their desire to inflict a new holocaust on the Palestinian people — this time, one of Israel's making.

We are not the only ones to say that the Israeli State commits war crimes and crimes of annihilation against Palestinians. Well-known Western officials also share that opinion, including senior international officials of the United Nations itself. Many of them have testified before the Security Council. Former United States President Jimmy Carter has not been the only one to say that Israel practices racial segregation against Palestinians. Before him, Bishop Desmond Tutu, who personally experienced racism, and Special Rapporteurs Jean Ziegler and John Dugard made similar statements.

Israel has the darkest record of violations and attacks against international peacekeeping forces in our region. Its aggression and attacks have been described in the Security Council as deliberate by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Israel is the only country in the world with a policy of targeted killing. Moreover, in the budget adopted annually by the Knesset, Israel dedicates funds for a policy that has been internationally condemned. Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has kept that item secret. However, since 2000 Israel has made those appropriations public.

Over time, Israel has violated every border and carried out terrorist operations outside its own territory — beginning in Tunisia and then moving on to Beirut, Cyprus, Iraq and every European capital. The statement by the Israeli representative, which included accusations against my country, was truly ironic, for he completely overlooked his country's official policy of terrorism. Israel introduced that policy to the region even before it was established in Palestine in 1948. Everyone is aware that terrorist groups such as the Stern Gang, the Irgun and the Hagganah killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and forced the displacement of millions from their land. They were also responsible for the assassination in Jerusalem of United Nations envoy Count Bernadotte because his conscience drove him to request a review of the resolution dividing Palestine into two States.

Israel carried out the first act of air piracy in modern history, when it hijacked a Syrian civilian airliner in 1954. In Beirut in 1968, Israel carried out political assassinations of unarmed civilian Palestinian intellectuals. In the 1980s Israel placed bombs in the cars of Palestinian mayors. Israel's aggressive behaviour in the region has led to the establishment of no fewer than five peacekeeping operations. Israel cooperated with the racist apartheid system in South Africa due to the similarities between that regime's doctrine and Israel's policy of ethnic cleansing and racial segregation in occupied Arab territories. Yet more surprising and strange is the fact that Israel bombed the United States spy vessel *Liberty* during the 1967 war, because it was certain that the ship was monitoring orders for the mass execution of Egyptian prisoners in the Sinai. We would also remind the Council that Israel destroyed a Libyan civilian airliner in 1971.

Finally, the statement by the representative of the United States suggesting that my country is interfering in the internal affairs of Lebanon is puzzling, given the blatant round-the-clock interference by the United States in Lebanon's affairs, which is taking place very publicly and openly and without any diplomatic or political constraints. That American interference has resulted in displeasure among large segments of the populations of Lebanon and the region.

Foreign interference in Lebanese affairs cannot serve the cause of Lebanon's stability, security and civil peace. Lebanon very much needs support and encouragement for its national unity, stability, civil peace and political independence, free from external influence or hegemony. Those who care about Lebanon must deal with that country while taking into account the will of the Lebanese people and ensuring Lebanon's integration into its natural Arab environment. They must not jeopardize Lebanon's stability by sending warships to its coasts.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to inform the Council that perhaps there was a mistake in interpretation earlier. The President asked speakers to limit their statements to five minutes, not 15 or 25.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March, a presidency that has been marked by dynamism and vigour. That, of course, is a reflection of the constructive work of the Russian Federation in the Middle East, as so well illustrated by the visits to the region by your Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov. I also convey my gratitude to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Panama, for the outstanding way in which he led our Council last month.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his presence here today and for his introductory statement. It would be remiss of us, of course, not to convey our gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Pascoe, for his briefing to the Council.

It is my great honour to address this Council on behalf of the Arab Group, representing the League of Arab States.

This meeting of the Security Council takes place at a time when the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is well known to all Council members and, in fact, to the international community as a whole. That is due to the obdurate stance taken by Israel and its attempts to extinguish any hope of a just and lasting peace, in particular following the renewed momentum created by the Annapolis Conference.

Indeed, for over four decades now — that is, the duration of the Israeli occupation — the Palestinian people have never ceased to aspire to the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and with the return of refugees in conformity with Assembly resolution 194 (III). Israel has always worked to undermine those hopes and to prolong the suffering of the Palestinian people. It has carried out settlement policies and has intimidated the population. That is a systematic policy, which is a clear and brazen violation of existing norms and standards.

Everyone is well aware that the Israeli occupation authorities, on a daily basis and before the eyes of the world, engage in practices that run counter to the provisions of international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That has been accomplished through acts of aggression against the civilian population and by prohibiting access to basic services and humanitarian

assistance, which has led to a serious deterioration of the situation of the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip. It is compounded by the settlements policy, the continued confiscation of lands and the construction of the separation wall despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Not only does Israel destroy the hopes of the Palestinian people for an independent Palestine and a stable Middle East, it also is attacks the credibility of this Organization and its ability to redress wrongs, restore the rights of Palestinian people and restore justice. Through its barbarian policies, it has contributed to weakening the authority and profile of the United Nations, as well as its credibility. All of that is unquestionable.

Faced with the situation in the Middle East — which is the result of Israeli intransigence, its refusal to work towards peace and the persistent threat to international peace and security it causes — the world turns to this Council. The world thus expects this Council to take urgent measures to force Israel to work for peace and to put an end to the bloodshed in Gaza and the West Bank by taking immediate measures to launch a just peace process that would lead to an Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and allow for the emergence of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, in conformity with the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

It is high time that the Council disprove the allegations heard worldwide that it is hostage to a number of its members who have taken a certain position regarding the conflict and have backed Israel. It is high time that the Council shoulder its responsibilities and live up to the trust and confidence that people place in it, that is, that it put an end to the daily bloodshed in the Middle East and to the practice of collective punishment, which runs counter to the principles of international law and international humanitarian law and those enshrined in the Charter. That should enable the Palestinian people to enjoy a decent life.

The occupied Syrian Golan continues to suffer under Israeli occupation, as it has since June 1967. The inhabitants of the Golan continue to suffer from the inhuman practices of occupation and annexation, despite resolution 497 (1981). In addition, measures of collective punishment are being carried out against Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan, who reject the occupation and are fighting against it. That is all taking place in brazen violation of international law, the Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention. As Mr. Pascoe said, the procedures for building settlements in the Syrian Golan are still being carried out — they are still being carried out.

The Arab territories in Lebanon continue to suffer under the yoke of Israeli occupation. Israel is also continuing its maritime, aerial and land-based violations of Lebanon's territory in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). It continues to refuse to provide maps of mine fields and cluster bombs dropped during the conflict in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. The impact of that conflict is still felt by Lebanese citizens to this very day. It falls to this Council to put an immediate end to the Israeli occupation and to work towards a withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab lands.

Statements made by the members of the international community here today have reaffirmed the support of the international community for the Palestinian people in their fight against the Israeli occupation. The same is true of statements calling for the Council to assume its important role in the maintenance of international peace and stability by taking all measures necessary to restore peace to the Palestinian people and to put an end to collective punishment by forcing Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories.

I hope that this will not just be a repeat of the recent past. The Arab Group calls on this Organization to fully play its rightful role, within the framework of efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations. We hope that the Secretary-General will participate in the Arab summit to be held at the end of this month in Damascus. We also call for an end to the Israeli occupation, one of the last bastions of colonialism in this century.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

The achievement of a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and the centrality of a just and lasting settlement of the core issue of Palestine in that regard is the shared objective of the international community, including this Council. The OIC has a strong and direct interest in the realization of this objective. It is manifested in our long-standing commitment and solidarity with the legitimate cause of the people of Palestine and all other occupied Arab territories. The principled position of the OIC is rooted in its firm conviction in the supremacy of international law, respect for the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principle of equal rights, self-determination of peoples, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The eleventh OIC summit conference, held in Dakar, Senegal, on 13 and 14 March 2008, reaffirmed the centrality of the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif for the whole Islamic Ummah. In the Dakar Declaration, the Islamic World reaffirmed its solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people to establish their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The summit reiterated its call on Israel to fully comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, to enable the establishment of the independent State of Palestine, to withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, and to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The leaders proclaimed, once again, the common position on the overall settlement of the Palestinian question in accordance with the OIC and United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map of the Quartet, within the spirit of the OIC's constant commitment to the Middle East peace process.

The framework for the Middle East peace process is well known. It is based essentially on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and the principle of land for peace. It is Israel's pattern of refusal to comply with these resolutions, which is hindering the achievement of peace and stability in the region. Unfortunately, it is the same behaviour of non-fulfilment of its obligations by Israel that is frustrating the understanding and objectives of recent important initiatives, at Annapolis and Paris, to revive the peace process, to end the occupation and to realize the two-State solution.

This is a tragic state of affairs. The rekindled hope for peace is being dashed by the incessant military onslaught by Israel, the Occupying Power, against the innocent, defenceless and besieged Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular the Gaza Strip.

The excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israel, including strikes by warplanes and ground artillery and targeted extrajudicial killings, among other grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, are a challenge to the conscience of the world community. We are deeply grieved and distressed at the heavy civilian casualties including, women, children and infants, and the trauma being endured by the Palestinian people in the face of widespread destruction.

This wanton use of force, collective punishment and terrorizing of civilian populations by the Occupying Power has no justification whatsoever. The OIC shares the international concern over further deterioration of the already dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip caused by the military escalation by Israel and its continuing illegal siege of the Gaza Strip.

Similarly, illegal Israeli actions against the civilian population in the West Bank, including the continuing construction of new settlements and the wall, only fuel the cycle of violence, undermine the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to establish calm and security, and threaten the prospects of peace.

The international community must respond to this deliberate policy of escalation of the ground situation aimed at derailing the fragile peace process. Israel must be held responsible for its actions and their dangerous consequences for the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories.

It is high time to ensure respect for the rule of law by putting an end to the impunity enjoyed by Israel. The OIC supports the call by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that incidents in which civilians have been killed or injured must be investigated, and accountability must be ensured. The OIC expects urgent follow-up action in that regard.

The Security Council, in particular, must act in a credible, timely and effective manner in fulfilment of its Charter responsibilities to address the threat to international peace and security. The Council cannot remain silent and marginalized as this crisis escalates, undermining international law, the sanctity of civilian

life and the vision of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace enshrined in the Council's own resolutions.

It is unfortunate and unacceptable for the Security Council to be deadlocked on even pronouncing itself in response to violence and deterioration of the situation on ground. The Council must condemn the killing of innocent civilians and violence, undertake measures to bring about an immediate ceasefire and its respect by all parties, ensure full compliance by Israel, the Occupying Power, with its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and demand an immediate end to the siege of the Gaza Strip.

Going beyond these crucial immediate steps, the Council must play its rightful strategic role in the pursuit of a comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East. It must demonstrate the political will to ensure full and non-discriminatory implementation of its own resolutions and to respond effectively to non-compliance. It must reclaim its position as the focal point of international efforts, and promote synergy among different initiatives and the political, security and humanitarian tracks. The Council must be the principal guarantor of the understandings and agreements entered into by the parties, including their respective obligations under the Road Map, the implementation of which it must also oversee.

The Security Council should thus make concerted efforts to bring about a rapid and tangible improvement of the situation on ground in the occupied territories, including through the release of prisoners and removal of all kinds of blockades and restrictions. It must ensure cessation of all policies and actions by Israel that seek to change the realities on the ground that could prejudice a final settlement, including the integrity and viability of the future Palestinian State. Israel must halt the construction of the illegal separation wall, freeze all settlement activity and dismantle unauthorized settler outposts.

The Council should ensure immediate and unfettered provision of adequate humanitarian assistance and of all essential goods and services in the occupied territories, in addition to enhanced economic, social and technical support from the international community, including for building State institutions and a security apparatus for the Palestinian Authority.

Peace is indivisible. That is why the summit conference in Dakar, while reiterating the demand that the situation on the ground in the Gaza Strip be restored to what existed prior to the events of June 2007, once again stressed the need for national dialogue among the Palestinians to achieve reconciliation and restore unity in order to serve the Palestinian people's higher national interests. We call on the international community to fully support the ongoing efforts for intra-Palestinian unity and welcome the breakthrough achieved in Sana'a.

The key to success in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict is in addressing its root cause, namely, the continuing Israeli occupation of the Arab territories. That is the leitmotif of the peace process, of which no aberration or unilateral alteration will be acceptable to the international community. The OIC calls for Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and all other occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan.

Comprehensive peace in the Middle East will remain elusive unless all aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict are addressed, including the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel tracks. We therefore urge progress on those parallel tracks to reach a just and durable settlement. Israel must withdraw completely from Lebanese land and the occupied Syrian Golan and comply fully with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

The OIC reaffirms its steadfast support to the Palestinian people for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and for a just resolution of the refugee issue in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

It was in keeping with our sincere commitment to that larger goal that, despite recent setbacks and the negative developments in the occupied territories, the OIC summit in Dakar welcomed the revival of the peace process and called for building on the momentum in order to reach a final settlement agreement before the end of 2008. It called also for the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State. The OIC is ready and willing to work with the international community and the Security Council to realize this collective objective.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

At the outset, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for having been present here this morning for our debate. I also would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing.

As is known, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory continues to deteriorate, marked by deadly violence, instability and high tension. In grave breach of international law and in contradiction of the peace process, Israel, the occupying Power, continues, inter alia, to launch military attacks against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip. It continues to expand its illegal settlements and to construct the wall in the West Bank, including in and around occupied East Jerusalem. It also continues to impose closures and restrictions on movement, including via the siege of the Gaza Strip, where the isolated and imprisoned Palestinian civilian population continues to suffer from a dire humanitarian crisis. At the same time, the situation in Lebanon remains complex, and the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan continues.

All of these realities affect not only the Middle East region, but the entire international community, for they seriously impact the prospects for peace, security and stability both in and beyond the region.

While aware of the recent efforts to advance the cause of peace, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) strongly believes that the lack of respect for international law by the occupying Power and its ongoing illegal occupation continue to be the major obstacles to the success of efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. The Movement reiterates its deep regret that for more than 40 years the Palestinian people have been suffering under the brutal Israeli military occupation and colonization of their land since 1967 and that they continue to be denied their fundamental human rights, including the inalienable right to self-determination and the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their lands, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

The toll in human lives, injured, displaced, homeless, impoverished and those without access to basic services in the occupied Palestinian territory continues to increase at an alarming rate. The poverty rate is currently 65.8 per cent in the occupied Palestinian territory, and in the Gaza Strip it is more than 79 per cent of the population. The continuing Israeli closures and restrictions on freedom of movement and on access to persons and goods, including humanitarian and medical goods, have made the Palestinian economic recovery nearly impossible and continue to aggravate the prevailing humanitarian crisis and to further destabilize the situation on the ground. Such violent and illegal actions have deepened the suffering of the innocent and defenceless Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, who are already suffering great poverty because of the continuing imposition of the crippling Israeli siege and the ensuing humanitarian crisis.

Moreover, Israel, in violation of numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 — which reaffirms the illegality of the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem — continues to build the wall and to impose an associated permit regime and to construct and expand its illegal settlements.

The NAM remains seriously concerned by Israel's recent decisions to continue the illegal construction of settlements and the wall. We are also concerned by the great physical, economic and social devastation caused by those illegal and destructive colonization practices, which are dividing the occupied Palestinian territory into separate, walled-in enclaves and severing East Jerusalem from the rest of the territory, undermining the unity, integrity and contiguity of the Palestinian territory. Furthermore, this construction destroys entire communities, displacing thousands of Palestinian civilians and isolating tens of thousands more Palestinians into isolated cantons.

The continuation of those illegal actions threatens the prospects for peace, as they will make the two-State solution and peace physically impossible to achieve. This requires the urgent attention of the Security Council, for the extremely negative consequences for the peace process are undeniable.

The peace process is not a sideline to the situation on the ground. Just as positive actions and progress in the peace process can benefit the aforementioned situations, the negative events and

illegal actions by Israel have a very detrimental impact not only the situation on the ground, but the peace process itself.

The NAM reiterates its call for Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all its violations against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to abide scrupulously by its obligations under international law, particularly humanitarian law and human rights norms.

The Government of Lebanon has continuously endeavoured to stabilize the situation in its territory following Israel's brutal aggression and serious violations of its territorial integrity and sovereignty. The NAM reiterates its satisfaction with the steps undertaken by the Lebanese Government to implement Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), particularly through the deployment of the Lebanese armed forces in the region south of the Litani River and along the Blue Line. The Movement also welcomes the deployment of the Lebanese armed forces along the northern and eastern borders of Lebanon in order to ensure security and stability at the borders.

The NAM remains deeply concerned by Israel's ongoing air and land violations of the Blue Line in breach of resolution 1701 (2006). We strongly call on Israel to end the occupation of the northern part of Ghajar, on the northern side of the Blue Line, and to immediately refrain from any violation of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006), as well as to refrain from any provocation of the Lebanese armed forces or the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

The NAM calls for the prompt settlement of the question of the Shab'a Farms in full respect for Lebanese territorial integrity, as stipulated in resolution 1701 (2006). We call upon all parties to cooperate in protecting Lebanon's sovereign rights in that area, and we note the important endeavours of the Secretary-General in this regard.

The NAM is acutely aware of the enormous challenge facing Lebanon as a result of the 1.2 million cluster bombs launched by Israel during its attack on Lebanon in 2006. The Movement once again condemns the use of such weaponry by Israel and deplores the death toll resulting from them. The NAM strongly calls upon Israel to provide the exact location of those deadly weapons and the maps of landmines planted during its occupation of southern Lebanon.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its support for the integrated plan of action contained in the statement on Lebanon issued by the foreign ministers of the Arab League on 5 January, and in that regard the Movement commends the efforts by the Secretary General of the Arab League to carry out that plan.

The Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the legal, physical and demographic condition and institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as the Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null, void and without legal effect.

We also reaffirm that all those measures and actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of the Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, constitute violations of international law, international agreements, the United Nations Charter and resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), the Fourth Geneva Convention, and a challenge to the international community. The Movement demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its hope that current efforts will ultimately bring an end to the occupation of all of the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 — the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan — and will lead to the establishment of the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a just solution of the question of refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Movement also hopes that recent international efforts will effectively contribute to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with the rules and principles of international law.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its support for the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and the principle of land for peace. Likewise, we reject attempts to alter the mandate of the peace process and the imposition of unilateral measures and strategies

aimed at the imposition by Israel, the occupying Power, of an illegal unilateral solution.

The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to support and contribute in all possible ways to the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and the road map.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I call on the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

First of all, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his remarks earlier today and Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing and frank assessment of the situation.

The European Union expresses its full support for the Annapolis process and its commitment to supporting the parties in their negotiations with a view to achieving a two-State solution. A just and sustainable solution to all aspects of the Middle East peace process can be achieved only through negotiation. Despite the difficulties that the process has recently experienced, the EU welcomes the intention of the parties to resume their negotiations and looks forward to an early meeting of Quartet principals.

The EU is deeply concerned about the recent violence in Gaza and southern Israel, especially the civilian casualties. It condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack on a seminary in Jerusalem on 6 March and the continued rocket attacks. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, the EU calls for an immediate end to all acts of violence.

The EU stresses the need for swift and tangible results on the ground in order to sustain negotiations. Action from both sides to implement their road map obligations is vital in order to retain the confidence and support of the Israeli and Palestinian populations, the region and the wider international community.

The EU is deeply concerned about the recent Israeli announcement that it intends to extend the settlement of Givat Ze'ev. The EU reiterates that settlement-building anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. Settlement activity prejudges the outcome of final status negotiations and threatens the viability of an agreed two-State solution. The EU therefore urges Israel to take immediate action, in particular on settlements and outposts. It calls on the Palestinian Authority to make further efforts to implement its obligations with regard to security, where needed in cooperation with the Israeli authorities. In that regard, the EU remains ready to strengthen and extend its Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories in order to support the reinforcement and reform of the Palestinian security forces.

The EU considers that the violent confrontations in and around Gaza have serious security implications. The EU is deeply concerned by the unsustainable humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for the controlled and sustained reopening of all crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows. While reconfirming in that context the Council conclusions of January 2008, it extends its full support to efforts to facilitate a peaceful solution to the present crisis. That solution should provide for a lasting period of quiet. The EU reiterates its readiness to resume its monitoring mission at Rafah, in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access of November 2005.

The EU recalls its commitment at the International Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State last December in Paris to support efforts to build the future Palestinian State, in accordance with the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. It calls for Israeli cooperation in the Plan's implementation. The EU expresses its full support for the upcoming international conferences on investments and economic revival in Bethlehem and in support of Palestinian civil police and rule of law in Berlin.

The EU continues to stand by its strong support for the Government and institutions of Lebanon in carrying out their missions to preserve Lebanon's stability, sovereignty, independence and territorial

integrity. The EU expresses concern about the ongoing political deadlock in Lebanon and the deterioration of the security situation.

The EU reiterates its strong support for the plan unanimously adopted by the Arab foreign ministers in seeking to broker a resolution to the political crisis and commends the continued efforts by Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa. It urges the parties in Lebanon to proceed, as a first step, to the immediate holding of the presidential election. The success of the plan requires all actors to play a constructive role. The EU recalls that the EU High Representative has been designated to spearhead the EU efforts with Arab countries in that respect.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I call on the representative of Israel to make a further statement.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): While I share the view expressed by some members of the Council as to the value of these debates, I feel that, at the end of this meeting, I would be remiss if I did not express our gratitude to the assassins of Damascus and the butchers of the Sudan — both beacons of human rights — for their expert presentations on terror and genocide. It was indeed enlightening to hear a lecture about targeted killings from a country under investigation by this very Council for assassinating its own political opponents in Lebanon, as well as about genocide from the monsters of Darfur. Maybe this meeting did serve some purpose after all.

As to the statement made by the Cuban representative, ostensibly speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, I find it strange and disturbing, just as I did the last time. While we heard here today from several representatives of countries that are members of the Movement a clear condemnation of terror, and especially of the massacre in Jerusalem on 6 March, there was not a single word about terror nor was there a condemnation of that brutal act in the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. It is precisely because we hear such very different statements from countries belonging to the Movement, both around this table and outside the Chamber, and precisely because of our deep respect for so many of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, that we wonder whether the representative of Cuba spoke on behalf of his own island. If not, whom does he really represent? I believe that both the Council and the Non-Aligned Movement deserve an explanation.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make an additional statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor once again. I shall be very brief, for I have already made a lengthy statement.

Perhaps had the Council met its responsibilities in the course of the decades of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we would not be at a point at which a Member State is requesting that this item be removed from the agenda, or one at which some people would feel uncomfortable listening to the representative of a country asking for an end to the occupation of its territory that has existed since 1967.

My country is a founding Member State of this international Organization. We consider ourselves to be among the victors in the war against Nazism and fascism. While there are fortunately many things that set us apart from the Israelis, a relevant distinguishing feature in the context of our discussion today is the fact that a permanent member of the Council has not had to use the veto 44 times to protect our efforts because of evasion of responsibilities under international law and the principles and objectives of the Charter. However, the State to which I am referring did use the veto 44 times to protect Israel as it evaded its commitments under the Charter and international law. It is for that reason that the representative of Israel been able to criticize various States, for he knows in advance that there is some one to protect him in the Council, even if it means using what is referred to as the privilege of the veto.

I shall summarize the mentality of the representative of Israel by recalling a story told by an Israeli dove. Speaking about Israel's disregard for the rights of others, that Israeli advocate of peace gave the following account, which has something to do with your country, Mr. President. The story goes as follows. At one point in the war between czarist Russia and Ottoman Turkey, a Russian citizen of the Jewish faith was conscripted into the army. He was sent to the Ottoman Turkish front, where the war was then taking place between czarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. As he was preparing to join the forces at the front, his

mother said to him, "My son, each time you kill a Turk you must rest for a few minutes". The boy was surprised by her statement and said to her, "But mother, what if a Turkish soldier were to kill me?" His mother replied, "God damn that Turkish soldier, my son! Why would he want to kill you? What could you have done to him to cause him to want to kill you?"

That is the Israeli mentality, one that allows for the killing and accusing of others while proclaiming its own innocence. However, it is all of us in the region who suffer from Israel's occupation, aggression, inhumanity and evasion of its commitments and the terms of reference for peace.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of the Sudan has requested the floor to make an additional statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We were not surprised that the representative of the Zionist entity fled the Chamber following his attack against my country. We were also not surprised by his baseless allegations, which are a reflection of his moral bankruptcy. Nor were we surprised by his reference to Darfur, for we know of Israel's covert influence in that region.

The comments by the representative of the Zionist entity regarding occupied Palestine also ring hollow. They were an attempt to cover up his country's crimes against humanity and its violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. The Zionist entity has undermined the credibility of the United Nations, which has been unable to put an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine. That is the real tragedy.

Given the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and of peace-loving countries, we are confident that Palestine's independence will be achieved, just as apartheid came to an end in South Africa. We say to the representative of the Zionist entity: say what you like; the fig leaf with which you clothe yourself will not serve to hide your crimes, nor will you enjoy impunity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of Cuba has asked for the floor to make an additional statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Quiñones Sánchez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): It really was never the intention of my delegation to take the floor for a second time in this debate. However, I believe it necessary and timely to respond to the deceptive comments made by the representative of Israel with regard to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and its firm position regarding the cause of the heroic Palestinian people and the situation in the Middle East.

First, I would like to emphasize that the Cuban delegation makes this statement in its capacity as Chair of the NAM Coordinating Bureau. You can be sure, Mr. President, that we could have included many more elements in our national capacity.

This is not the first time that the Israeli representative has made offensive and distorted statements with regard to the position of the Movement on the issue before us today. I would like to make it clear to the representative of Israel that the speech read out in the Chamber by Cuba's representative just a few minutes ago represents the opinion of the 118 members of the Movement.

Israel is once again attempting to divert attention from truly important issues and to hide the facts about the daily occurrences in the occupied Arab territories, especially the crimes committed in the Palestinian territory. Distortion and manipulation will not prevent the Non-Aligned Movement from setting out its principled position on the situation in Palestine and the Middle East in all the relevant international forums, including the Security Council.

The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to express its resolute opposition to the illegal Israeli occupation, as well as its full support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, throughout the entirety of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel. We shall continue to denounce the occupying Power's non-respect for international law as the main obstacle to the success of the efforts intended to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

We shall continue to demand that Israel withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders. We shall not be silent on the issue of Israel's relentless aggression and its grave violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We hope that, at some point, the Government of Israel will demonstrate genuine political commitment to making progress in the peace process — not just with rhetoric, but with concrete actions.

As it always has, the Non-Aligned Movement will continue to firmly support the peace process in the Middle East on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and the principle of land for peace.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.